

Jennings to leave GLSEN, Foreman the Task Force

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Two leaders of national LGBT organizations have announced their resignations.

Kevin Jennings will leave the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, which he founded 13 years ago. A search will begin shortly for his successor and he will remain with the organization for six months, or until his successor is in place, according to the January 16 announcement.

In a statement, Jennings said that he "felt a need to move on and find new challenges in my life through which I can continue to help make our world a better place."

Jennings, 44, founded the first gay-straight alliance in 1988 when he was a teacher at Concord Academy in Massachusetts. "Our vision was a school where every student felt safe and respected. Our belief was that every student deserved an education free of bullying and harassment, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, or that of their friends, family or loved ones," Jennings wrote in a welcoming statement posted on GLSEN's Web site.

That concept has grown from a single school to more than 3,700 gay-straight alliances across the country. Most are essentially volunteer organizations.

GLSEN was founded in 1994 and has grown to a national staff of 40 with offices in New York City and Washington, D.C., and an annual budget that tops \$6 million.

It provides education and training for volunteers and school administrations and has created programs such as the national Day of Silence, to protest bullying and harassment that schools often ignore. The 2005 National School Climate Survey measured incidence of and attitudes toward bullying.

"When schools have anti-harassment policies that include categories like sexual orientation, not only does harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity decrease, so does the incidence of other forms of harassment," Jennings said.

Bob Chase, chair of GLSEN's board of directors, said, "While we are sorry to see him go, we are confident the organization will continue to grow and thrive under new leadership by building on the remarkable foundation his efforts have provided over the years."

In the San Francisco Bay Area, GLSEN's local chapter broke ties with the national group in 2006 when GLSEN underwent a restructuring. It renamed itself Ally Action and continues to work on school safety issues locally.

Foreman

Matt Foreman will step down in April after five years as executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. The organization had retrenched in the years immediately prior to his joining it, but Foreman reversed that and during his tenure the annual budget more than doubled to nearly \$10 million and the staff increased to 54.

He deftly inched the organization toward the political and ideological center while keeping the organization's liberal activist base of support relatively happy. Most recently he played a leading

role in building a broad national coalition within the LGBT community – United ENDA – to support a transgender-inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act.

Foreman, 53, led the New York City Gay & Lesbian Anti-Violence Project (1990–1996) and the Empire State Pride Agenda (1997–2003) prior to joining the Task Force.

He will be going to the Evelyn & Walter Hass Jr. Fund, where he will head up LGBT grant-making activities. The fund is based in San Francisco and was created in 1952. The late Walter Haas played a large role in building Levi Strauss & Co. into the purveyor of the iconic blue jeans. The fund's assets total about a quarter of a billion dollars, and it is one of the larger donors to LGBT activities.

Alan Acosta, Task Force board co-chair, said a national search would begin immediately to find Foreman's successor. Foreman will work with his senior executive staff in the interim to ensure a smooth transition to new leadership.

"We are blessed to have an extraordinarily strong and deep management team," Acosta said in a statement.

Acosta said the Task Force's programmatic priorities for next year include building congressional support to pass an inclusive ENDA in 2009, defeating an expected anti-marriage constitutional amendment in California, and launching the organization's new Academy for Leadership and Action, designed to support skills and leadership development for state and local activists.